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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2381
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUCPDOG/USDOC WASHDC 0660
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0803
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 2787
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2169
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 001516

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN (GEHRENBECK)

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [SOCI](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ ELECTIONS: MISCOUNTING THE VOTE

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Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Lee Litzenberger for Reasons 1.4
(b) and (d)

11. (SBU) Summary: Despite the relatively peaceful conduct of the Kyrgyz parliamentary vote on December 16, the Embassy's 14 teams of observers noted widespread irregularities and vote total manipulations. Observers in Osh and Jalalabad oblasts recorded numerous instances of unchallenged repeat voting. In Talas, a precinct chairman wanted to shield the Embassy team from ballot forging, whereas another team in Chui oblast witnessed a blackout and subsequent questions about ballots appearing during the blackout. The Embassy team in Talas also observed the revision of precinct vote protocols at the town election commission, which resulted in additional votes for the pro-presidential Ak Jol party. With the December 20 announcement that opposition party Ata Meken will not gain seats in parliament, questions remain as to what options Ata Meken will pursue. End Summary.

12. (U) The Embassy fielded 14 teams composed of Americans and local staff in all regions, except for southwestern Batken oblast, to observe voting in the December 16 Kyrgyz parliamentary elections.

Questionable Actions During Voting

13. (SBU) While the elections passed relatively peacefully, Embassy personnel noted numerous irregularities in the voting. In Osh, Embassy observers noted repeat voting by students at Osh State University. At the Osh vodka distillery, Embassy observers were escorted to another room for registration and subsequently discovered a large number of ballots had been deposited in the ballot box during their absence. In Jalalabad, a voter returned to the polling station and handed a precinct election commission (PEC) staffer a passport with the request that he "give it back to

the owner." A man was later observed outside this same polling station with a stack of passports, a scene repeated elsewhere in Jalalabad oblast.

14. (SBU) Many voters were shuttled between different precincts for voting. In Jalalabad oblast, an Embassy team noticed a white van deposit about 10 men to vote at one precinct. After moving to another precinct, the same Embassy team observed the same van and voters arrive to the new precinct to vote without any questions being raised. Elsewhere, voter lists were padded with hundreds of additional voters who had "returned" from work in Kazakhstan and Russia. Police and military personnel were (illegally) present inside many polling stations. Outside the Kok Oy polling station in Talas oblast, a Border Guard lieutenant colonel was overheard advising a general and the local oblast governor in separate conversations the status of votes by border guards marshaled to vote at the station.

Staging the Vote Count

15. (SBU) When an Embassy team arrived at Talas City School #8 shortly before 20:00 to observe the closing vote count, the PEC Chairman began making and receiving frantic phone calls while occasionally holding a flashlight. At about 20:45, and before the ballot boxes had been opened, the PEC Chairman pulled the local Embassy employee aside and suggested that he do him a "favor" and escort the American observer outside. "We were told to forge ballots," the PEC Chairman explained to the local Embassy employee, "and we could have convinced the other local observers to agree, but not in the presence of a foreigner." After the Embassy team declined the request, PEC members opened the ballot box and began sorting (but not announcing) the votes while the PEC

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Chairman continued his phone conversations with explanations that "the Embassy is still here," "there are two of them sitting here," and "they're still watching me." Finally, after 22:00, the PEC Chairman posted the results on the precinct protocol with opposition Ata Meken besting pro-presidential Ak Jol 290 to 166, and with all remaining 10 parties receiving less than 100 votes each.

16. (SBU) In contrast to events at Talas City School #8, the presence of an Embassy team in Sokuluk in Chui oblast did not prevent the need for flashlights during the vote count. Shortly after 20:00 and following the dumping of ballots onto the counting table, the lights went out. Within 15 seconds, numerous flashlights were ablaze. A PEC member, who then looked at the illuminated table picked up a big bundle of ballots and shouted "who put this in here?" The head of the local village administration grabbed the PEC member, pulled her away and spoke with her. Despite her objection that "this was not right," they both returned to the table and she began counting the bundle, containing ballots folded in a manner inconsistent with other ballots. The lights soon came back on. The final precinct protocol results showed a whopping 90% turnout of 1330 voters even though local observers in the room had recorded about 450 people voting (to include absentee ballots) during the day. The vote count listed 659 votes for Ak Jol, 459 for Ata Meken, 110 for the Social Democrats and four other parties receiving less than 50 votes each.

Getting the Figures Right

17. (SBU) After the precinct protocols had been inked, the PEC chairs, accompanied by police escorts, carried the protocols and ballots to town or rayon election commissions. In Talas City, the Embassy team saw the PEC teams arrive with ballots over the course of several hours. The town election commission (TEC) chairman learned of the Embassy presence and signed off on Talas City School #8's protocol. Many other

precinct protocols, however, were revised. Talas City School #6 saw an increase in votes from 811 registered in the initial protocol to 1,657 in the TEC-endorsed version. Ak Jol's vote total from School #6 subsequently increased from 231 to 1,077 while all other parties saw no change in their figures. The total number of votes at Talas City School #5 remained the same, but the updated TEC-endorsed protocol shaved 154 votes from numerous parties to boost Ak Jol's total to 444, thereby matching Ata Meken's 444 votes in that precinct.

18. (SBU) Throughout the evening and following morning (the Embassy team in Talas stayed at the TEC until about 5:00 am), the Embassy team noted that many TEC calculations were taking place outside the eyes of domestic observers. An Ata Meken observer complained to Emboff that the PEC at the Talas hospital precinct issued blank protocols to observers and departed with the ballots. The Embassy team observed a stack of unattended packets (shaped in the form of ballots believed to be from the hospital precinct) in the TEC auditorium, which later disappeared and were later disclosed to have been located in the TEC Chairman's office. The Ata Meken observer complained that the vote total for the hospital precinct had been adjusted upwards by several hundred, with Ak Jol commanding a majority of the vote.

Comment

19. (C) Embassy teams saw clear cases of fraud and abuse of administrative resources in the election. While some domestic observers may have complained, PECs often did not acknowledge complaints, but in other instances domestic observers may have been cowered for fear of the consequences.

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With the December 20 announcement of the parties "winning" parliamentary seats (Ak Jol with 71, the Social Democrats with 11 and the Communists with 8), the question remains as to whether the conduct of the elections will cause the opposition, and in particular Ata Meken, to pursue other options. Embassy will comment septel in more detail about the new parliament and the implications of the December 20 announcement.

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